

Cascade Foothills Initiative: *Saving our Rivers and Forests*  
Letter of Intent  
February 2, 2004

This letter of intent between Snohomish County, King County, Pierce County, Washington State Department of Natural Resources, the Trust for Public Land and Cascade Land Conservancy introduces the Cascade Foothills Initiative, an innovative conservation strategy for the foothills forest landscape within Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties. The Cascade Foothills Initiative provides for both a sustained timber-economy and the long-term environmental and ecological benefits of our low elevation forests through responsible, working forestry. Our communities' desires for forest conservation and superior land management far exceed available public funding and private philanthropy. This Initiative seeks to combine current tools with innovative new methods to provide self-supporting acquisition and maintenance funding that compliment existing forest conservation funds. This letter sets forth the intent of the parties only and does not create any binding obligation on the part of any party. This letter sets forth the initial steps to this major effort. Each party's actions provided for herein will evolve as we execute subsequent agreements and actions to carry out the intent of this letter.

RECITALS

The private land of interest is approximately 600,000 acres of forested land in Snohomish County, King County, and Pierce County.

The properties possess forest, natural (e.g., fish and wildlife), scenic, open space, recreational, economic, and educational values (collectively "Conservation Values") of great importance to the people of Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties, and the people of the State of Washington.

Permanent protection of these properties will significantly add to the protected and conserved lands in the State of Washington. The legislatively declared policies of the State of Washington in the Washington State Open Space Tax Act, Chapter 84.34 RCW ( the "Open Space Act"), provide "... that it is in the best interest of the state to maintain, preserve, conserve, and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands for the production of food, fiber and forest crop, and to assure the use and enjoyment of natural resources and scenic beauty for the economic and social well being of the state and its citizens."

Cascade Land Conservancy and Trust for Public Land have long histories of working effectively with government agencies to acquire and protect important rural and forest lands. Cascade Land Conservancy, as the facilitator of this initiative will continue to provide nongovernmental leadership; the Trust for Public Land and Cascade Land Conservancy will work together to coordinate acquisitions and increased funding within the foothills focus area of the initiative. Cascade Land Conservancy and Trust for Public Land are committed to providing the support and technical resources necessary to accomplish the goals of this ambitious initiative. Cascade Land Conservancy and Trust for Public Land are further committed to advance each other's missions and organizational growth through a collaborative working relationship based upon open communications, strategic planning and cooperative negotiation and fundraising efforts.

All six parties intend to maintain a close working relationship to help minimize costs and leverage resources.

## GOALS

The goal of the partnership is to conserve approximately 600,000 acres of forest landscape along the foothills of the Cascades to achieve significant landscape-scale conservation through individual conservation transactions. Once conserved, this landscape will be stewarded to provide multiple benefits. Snohomish County, King County, Pierce County, and the Washington State Department of Natural Resources are committed to conserving rural forests and industrial working forests for the continued production of forest products, maintenance of a traditional way of life, protection of regional water quality and wildlife habitat, and the recovery of species listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act.

## KEY ACTIONS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE INITIATIVE

Within available resources, Snohomish County Executive agrees to:

Dedicate the following resources to advance the initiative

- a. Assign lead staff
- b. Advance the following goals within the foothills:
  - i. Protect the working forest landscape of east Snohomish County
  - ii. Maintain existing forestry economy and rural/industrial economy
  - iii. Protect important ecological features along the Skykomish, Stillaguamish, Snoqualmie, and upper Sauk Rivers, along with key tributaries
  - iv. Prevent sprawl and residential leapfrogging into the forest production district
- c. Seek to achieve the following objectives:
  - i. Federal funding to compliment overall effort (place project on county's Federal Agenda for next 6 years) and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - ii. State funding to acquire ecologically sensitive properties and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - iii. To identify local funding to acquire conservation easements or underlying fee for working forest (may request State DNR to manage)
  - iv. To identify local funding to acquire ecologically sensitive properties
  - v. To recruit private industry partners to acquire and manage forest lands protected with working forest conservation easements
  - vi. Analyze whether a TDR or similar program would be an economically viable means to reduce or focus densities of the foothills forest landscape
  - vii. Provide staff and technical resources to achieve the overall landscape objectives.
- d. County commits to working with partners to develop and implement a coordinated plan of action to accomplish these goals and objectives.

Within available resources, the King County Executive agrees to:

Dedicate the following resources to advance the initiative

- b. Assign lead staff
- c. Advance the following goals within the foothills:
  - i. Protect the working forest landscape of east King County
  - ii. Maintain existing forestry economy and rural/industrial economy
  - iii. Protect important ecological features along the Snoqualmie, Green and White River, along with key tributaries
  - iv. Prevent sprawl and residential leapfrogging into the forest production district
- d. Seek to achieve the following objectives:
  - i. Federal funding to compliment overall effort (place project on county's Federal Agenda for next 6 years) and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - ii. State funding to acquire ecologically sensitive properties and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - iii. To identify local funding to acquire working forest conservation easements or underlying fee (may request State DNR to manage)
  - iv. To identify local funding to acquire ecologically sensitive properties
  - v. To recruit private industry partners to acquire and manage forest lands protected with working forest conservation easements
  - vi. To utilize the program to reduce or focus densities of the foothills forest landscape where feasible
  - vii. Provide staff and technical resources to achieve the overall landscape objectives.
- e. County commits to working with partners to develop and implement a coordinated plan of action to accomplish these goals and objectives.

Within available resources, the Pierce County Executive agrees to:

- a. Assign lead staff: Skip Stansbury, Special Assistant to the Executive
- b. Advance the following goals within the foothills:
  - i. Recruit grant funding to complete further ecological analysis and planning
  - ii. Protect the working forest landscape of northeast Pierce County
  - iii. Maintain existing forestry economy (local jobs and Simpson Mill)
  - iv. Protect important ecological features along the White, Carbon and Puyallup Rivers
  - v. Protect water supply for Town of Burnett and Headwaters to South Prairie Creek
  - vi. Protect viewsheds leading to Mount Rainier National Park
- c. Seek to achieve the following objectives:
  - i. Federal funding to compliment overall effort (place project on county's Federal Agenda for next 6 years) and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - ii. State funding to acquire ecologically sensitive properties and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - iii. To identify local funding to acquire working forest conservation easements or underlying fee (may request State DNR to manage)
  - iv. To identify local funding to acquire ecologically sensitive properties
  - v. To recruit private industry partners to acquire and manage forest lands protected with working forest conservation easements

- vi. Analyze whether a TDR or similar program would be an economically viable means to reduce or focus densities of the foothills forest landscape.
- vii. Provide staff and technical resources to achieve the overall landscape objectives
- d. County commits to working with partners to develop and implement a coordinated plan of action to accomplish these goals and objectives.

Within available resources, Washington State Department of Natural Resources agrees to:

- a. Assign lead staff:
  - i. Bonnie Bunning, Executive Director
  - ii. Todd Myers, Communications Director
- b. Advance the following goals within the foothills:
  - i. Acquisition of new lands must be clearly for forestry purposes (associated with trust revenue production) or clearly for ecological conservation purposes (NRCA). While DNR may seek to protect lands for ecological purposes within and beyond the forest foothills addressed in this LOI, the following goals are specific to working forest lands:
    - a. Protect working forest functionality of existing landownership
    - b. Pay forestland prices to potentially expand working forest landownership during the next 2-6 years to properties:
      - 1. adjacent to existing ownership
      - 2. in large and buffered block
      - 3. with appropriate blend of stand classes  
(may be very young trees if portfolio allows)
      - 4. with premium forestry site conditions
      - 5. that do not include extraordinary ecologically sensitive landscape features
- c. Seek to achieve the following objectives:
  - i. Federal funding to compliment overall effort (place project on agency's Federal Agenda for next 6 years) and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - ii. State funding for Legacy Trust; and, should funding become available consider these lands as top candidates for acquisition by the Legacy Trust
  - iii. To identify other State funding to acquire appropriate lands directly adjacent to existing ownership and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - iv. To enter inter-agency land and forest management agreements with counties, on the model of the King County Biosolids Management Plan.
  - v. Provide staff and technical resources to achieve the overall landscape objectives.
- d. Agency commits to working with partners to develop and implement a coordinated plan of action to accomplish these goals and objectives.

Within available resources, the Trust for Public Land agrees to:

- a. Assign Ken Krasner as the organizational point of contact who will maintain communications between the partners and TPL's project staff.
- b. Advance the following goals within the foothills:
  - i. Protect the working forest landscape of Snohomish, King and Pierce counties

- ii. Maintain existing forestry economy and rural/industrial economy
  - iii. Protect important ecological features along the Skykomish, Stillaguamish, Snoqualmie, Green, White, Carbon, and Puyallup rivers, along with key tributaries
  - iv. Prevent sprawl and residential leapfrogging into the forest production district
  - v. Coordinate with partners to achieve a significant landscape-scale conservation effort through individual conservation transactions.
- c. Seek to achieve the following objectives:
  - i. Federal funding to compliment overall effort (place project on TPL's Federal Agenda for next 6 years) and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - ii. State funding for Legacy Trust; and, should funding become available consider these lands as top candidates for acquisition by the Legacy Trust.
  - iii. State and local funding to acquire land of interest within the project and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - iv. Provide staff and technical resources to achieve the overall landscape and funding objectives.
  - v. To acquire these lands using a variety of approaches including fee and conservation easement purchase.
- d. Next steps for the Trust for Public Land:
  - i. Work with partners to develop and implement a coordinated plan of action to accomplish these goals and objectives.
  - ii. Work with partners to establish acquisition priorities for the three-county region.
  - iii. Work closely with major landowners to assist them with their needs to divest lands of importance.

Within available resources, Cascade Land Conservancy agrees to:

- a. Assign significant staff resources:
  - i. Peggy Bill, Snohomish County Conservation Director
  - ii. Chip Nevins, King County Conservation Director
  - iii. Ryan Dicks, Pierce County Conservation Director
  - iv. Michelle Connor, Regional Conservation Director
- b. Provide nongovernmental leadership and coordination to advance the Cascade Foothills Initiative.
- c. Advance the following goals within the foothills:
  - i. Protect the working forest landscape of Snohomish, King and Pierce counties
  - ii. Maintain existing forestry economy and rural/industrial economy
  - iii. Protect important ecological features along the Skykomish, Stillaguamish, Snoqualmie, Green, White, Carbon, and Puyallup rivers, along with key tributaries
  - iv. Prevent sprawl and residential leapfrogging into the forest production district
  - v. Coordinate with partners to achieve a significant landscape-scale conservation effort through individual conservation transactions.
- d. Seek to achieve the following objectives:
  - i. Federal funding to compliment overall effort (place project on Cascade Land Conservancy's Federal Agenda for next 6 years) and to pursue projects

according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.

- ii. State funding for Legacy Trust; and, should funding become available consider these lands as top candidates for acquisition by the Legacy Trust
  - iii. State and local funding to acquire land of interest within the project and to pursue projects according to an articulated schedule, in which cooperation is sought amongst the partners.
  - iv. Provide staff and technical resources to achieve the overall landscape and funding objectives.
  - v. To provide technical and staff resources to assist agency partners to conserve these lands using a variety of innovative approaches including innovative tax structures, creative development agreements, transfer of development rights programs, tax-exempt or leveraged financing and conservation development joint ventures, in addition to fee and conservation easement purchases.
- e. Next steps for Cascade Land Conservancy:
- i. Work with partners to develop and implement a coordinated plan of action to accomplish these goals and objectives.
  - ii. Work with partners to establish landscape priorities for the three-county region.
  - iii. Work closely with major landowners to assist them with their needs to divest lands of importance.
  - iv. Work with County and Agency staff to identify each entity's most effective conservation tools.
  - v. Help implement conservation tools with Snohomish County, King County and Pierce County.

All Parties intend to cooperatively seek Federal Forest Legacy funding beginning in Fiscal Year 2004 to supplement local and state funding.

All Parties intend to cooperatively seek to establish long-term stewardship and acquisition funding partnerships with the State Department of Natural Resources, State Department of Parks, and or private non-profit organizations.

All parties agree to work in good faith in the implementation of the above items in order to preserve the regionally significant lands identified in the Cascade Foothills Initiative.

### Conclusion

It is in our generation's hands to save the large remaining corridors of forested open space while keeping alive our traditional working forest economy. We look forward to working in collaboration with other entities already implementing foothills conservation efforts. We embrace the opportunity that The Cascade Foothills Initiative offers to save rivers and forests – providing a lasting legacy of environmental and economic stewardship.

Washington Department of Natural Resources

---

Doug Sutherland  
Commissioner of Public Lands

---

Date

Snohomish County

King County

Pierce County

---

Signature  
Aaron Reardon  
County Executive

---

Signature  
Ron Sims  
County Executive

---

Signature  
John Ladenburg  
County Executive

---

Date

---

Date

---

Date

Trust for Public Land

King County Council

Cascade Land Conservancy

---

Signature  
Roger Hoesterey  
President

---

Signature  
Larry Phillips  
Chair

---

Signature  
Gene Duvernoy  
President

---

Date

---

Date

---

Date